



MAINE JUDICIAL BRANCH
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

PORTLAND OFFICE
P.O. Box 4820
Portland, ME 04112-4820
Phone: 207-822-0792
Fax: 207-776-6096

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Amy Quinlan, Esq., Director of Court Communications
Phone: (207) 822-0716 (office)
(207) 615-04247(mobile)
Email: amy.quinlan@courts.maine.gov

Judicial Branch Welcomes New Chief Justice Valerie Stanfill

June 17, 2021, Portland, Maine. The Maine Judicial Branch announced today that Superior Court Justice Valerie Stanfill was sworn in by Governor Janet Mills as the 27th Chief Justice of the Maine Supreme Judicial Court.

Chief Justice Stanfill is the second woman to be nominated and confirmed as Chief Justice, following the Honorable Leigh Ingalls Saufley, who resigned in April 2020 to accept a position as Dean of the University of Maine School of Law. Chief Justice Stanfill's nomination received unanimous approval by the Legislature's Joint Committee on the Judiciary and confirmation by the full Maine Senate. At her confirmation hearing before the Judiciary Committee, Chief Justice Stanfill emphasized a key principle that has guided her as a judge — that every person who comes to court be treated with fairness, respect, and justice. "It takes more to be a judge than to simply decide the case. All that [judges] do is informed by words sometimes attributed to Plato: 'Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle.'"

Following her swearing in, Chief Justice Stanfill thanked Governor Mills and the Legislature for the trust and confidence they have placed in her to lead Maine's third branch of government.

"After 14 years on the bench as a District Court judge, and most recently, as a Superior Court justice, I am still grateful every day for the opportunity to serve the people of Maine. I am eager to collaborate with colleagues within the court system and with stakeholders representing diverse interests outside the Judicial Branch, to tackle many of the immediate issues facing the court system. These issues include the case backlog created by the COVID-19 pandemic, systemic racism and bias, criminal pretrial reform and sentencing, and constitutionally required legal representation for poor litigants."

Chief Justice Stanfill was first nominated to the District Court in 2007 by Governor Angus King, re-nominated by Gov. LePage in 2014, and nominated to the Superior Court in 2020 by Gov. Mills before being nominated to be Chief Justice. Before joining the bench, Chief Justice Stanfill practiced law for 15 years in Lewiston and was a visiting professor at the University of Maine Law and Director of the Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic, where she taught trial practice and advanced trial advocacy. In 1999, she initiated a domestic violence legal clinic as part of the program. Law students in the clinic continue to provide assistance to unrepresented individuals in the Lewiston District Court who are seeking a Protection from Abuse order.





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Chief Justice Stanfill joins Senior Associate Justice Andrew M. Mead, Associate Justice Ellen A. Gorman, Associate Justice Joseph M. Jabar, Associate Justice Thomas E. Humphrey, Associate Justice Andrew M. Horton, Associate Justice Catherine R. Connors on the 7-member Court.

“The Maine Judicial Branch expresses its deepest gratitude to Senior Associate Justice Andrew M. Mead who stepped in just as the pandemic was beginning to surge to serve as Acting Chief Justice after Chief Justice Saufley’s departure. His calm and steady leadership throughout this past year could not have been more appreciated as we all worked together to bring justice during this most trying time to the citizens of Maine,” said Chief Justice Valerie Stanfill.

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